



# Identifying and evaluating market demands. Creating a recognizable product in partnership with the local community

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Heritage Tours/ LoonaManor/Vilsandi NP  
Saaremaa island, Estonia  
2011





## Background

- 1980- in the tourism industry.
- 2005 -teacher of tourism subjects.
- 2006 “Heritage Tours”
- 2009 – operator of Loona Manor, centre of Vilsandi NP (1910)
- 2009,2010 – nominated for “Tourism Developer of the Year” on Saaremaa
- Tourest 2011 – nominated for “Tourism Developer of the Year” in Estonia.





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## Road Signs on Ice Road 😊







## Advantages of our Islands as Tourist Destinations

- Islands – seemingly difficult to access, but therefore more attractive ☺ and challenging;





## Advantages of our Islands as Tourist Destinations

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- Compact, all destinations easy to reach, short distances between sights;
- Well developed infrastructure;
- Plenty to see and experience;
- English is widely spoken.



## Advantages of our Islands as Tourist Destinations

- NATURAL HERITAGE
- Kaali meteorite crater – the best accessible site of its kind in Europe.
- The oldest nature protection area in the Baltics (Vilsandi NP);
- Abundant Birdlife (incl. Stellers eider), wildlife and butterflies;
- Extremely rich flora – 34 species of wild orchids, relict and endemic species;
- Open limestone cliffs with Silurian fossils, corals in the Baltic sea.
- Interesting semi-natural coastal landscapes





# Kaali Meteorite Crater





# Silurian Fossils





# Silurian Cliff and Gray Seals





# Seals, and Wildlife





## Vilsandi NP – IBA

Steller's Eider  
*Polysticta stelleri*



*Photo: Jari Peltomäki*



# Wild Orchids, endemics, relicts







## Advantages of Saaremaa and Muhu

- HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE:
  - Numerous medieval, well preserved churches;
  - Kuressaare Episcopal Castle;
  - Manors, lighthouses, harbour sites;
  - Picturesque and well preserved villages;
  - Windmills, dry-stone walls, ancient bridges;
  - Folk traditions, colourful costumes, charming traditional life-style, language, habits.





- Karja church
- Kihelkonna church







- Episcopal Castle











# Requirements for Market Development

- Connections: ferry, flight, bus, ***ice road***  
😊
- Accommodation
- Services – wide range
- Good infrastructure
- Wide choice of activities





## Two major aspects of our business

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- Two concepts:
  - similar, but different,
  - United, but independent.



## Two major aspects of our business

- **Heritage Tours**- packaging natural and cultural heritage in modern ways to make it attractive for today's demanding and urbanized visitors.
- **Loona Manor** – start nature tourism in Vilsandi National Park and building up the nature tourism visitor center.



## Two major aspects of our business

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- Main target groups for Loona and HT:  
DE,RU;
- Side targets: NL, UK, LV,FI,SE



# Heritage Tours

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- [www.heritagetours.ee](http://www.heritagetours.ee)
- [www.parimusmatkad.ee](http://www.parimusmatkad.ee) (in Estonian)
- Format for NP
- Demand for heritage groups for Estonia and the Baltics is rising.



# Loona Manor

- [www.loonamanoor.ee](http://www.loonamanoor.ee)
- 1509, the only manorial complex on Saaremaa.
- 1910 – Vilsandi National Park
  - Centre of VNP since 1997
- 6 different buildings, different functions:
  - Exhibition House
  - Stone House
  - Stable
  - 2 houses not presently developed
  - **Manor house**



# LoonaManor

- Guesthouse, tenting, loft
- Caffe-restaurant Kadvel, outdoor caffe
- Tourist information
- Daily regular Heritage Tours
- Travel agency, travel services
- Souvenir sales
- Piano hall – culture programmes
- Workshops
- Exhibition hall
- Stone house





VLADIMÍR  
BAHVOŠTAKO  
KEMLE





## Main Goal for Loona & HT

- Develop area via developing tourism.
- Bringing together local entrepreneurs to form one product – the Heritage Tours.
- Facing the Sea - slogan.
  - Coastal heritage.



## Tourism = Income

- Tourism and services are often considered to be a non-productive activity.
  - See regional possibilities;
  - Understand how tourism „works“;
  - Show the values and opportunities in our own region, home.



# Educating the Young

- Children should be
  - love the local area, but learn from distant areas and utilise the new knowledge.





## Educating the Young

- Schools could be encouraged to prepare students to consider learning skills associated with tourism.





## Educating the Young

- Special programmes for schools
- Student summer courses
- Nature Tourism Conference in oct 2011



# Become an Entrepreneur

- One possibility to survive is to develop one's own business.

- Enterprise Estonia





## EDEN contest

- 2009 - mapping possibilities of the area
- 2010 - engaging more locals
- 2011 – mapping Loona Manor – centre of Vilsandi NP





# Problems and Solutions

- Having a boat and fishing knowledge is not enough to provide a quality fishing-tour as a product.
- Knowledge of local (coastal) skills.
- Locals lack the service and sales skills.
- **SERVICE MAKES THE PRODUCT**





# Problems and Solutions

- **LACK OF MOTIVATED HELPERS, SEASONAL WORKERS.**
  - students!!!
  - voluteers!!!











# Problems and solutions

- **UNIFIED PRODUCTS ARE EASY TO SELL**
  - Heritage Tours regulars
- **INTERNET MARKETING**
- No proper website for NP and the area:
  - [www.saaremaanaturetourism.ee](http://www.saaremaanaturetourism.ee)
  - [www.visitestonia.co](http://www.visitestonia.co)





# Problems and Solutions

- **SEASONALITY, SHORT SEASON**
  - Out of season products (bird watchers, hunters, seals, services for spa-hotels, ice road etc)
- **CENTRAL BOOKING SYSTEM FOR NP**
  - centre of the NP could provide booking service.
  - Tourist Information in the village.
  - Voucher system.



# Winter activities









## What have I learned

- A product by itself cannot succeed.
  - infrastructure support
  - input from local suppliers
- Recognition of our have made us well-known, people have started to trust our concept.
- Step by step, no hurry, and you will be the winner😊





# Welcome to Saaremaa!





**Thank you !**

